

# What is Culture?

- A system of shared values, beliefs, behaviors, and norms (VBBN).
- Members of society use culture to cope with their world and with one another.
- Learned from one generation to the next.

# Values

- Ideas of what is right and wrong.
  - ❑ Positive values--rewarded by society
  - ❑ Negative values--punished by society
- Examples of values:
  - ❑ Importance of family
  - ❑ Courage
  - ❑ Strength
  - ❑ Fairness

# Beliefs

- **A view of reality shared by a group.**

- **Physical**

- How the world is put together--the earth revolves around the sun.
    - The relationship between humans and their environment--humans are at the top of the food chain.

- **Nonphysical**

- The nature of a supernatural world--ghosts do exist.
    - The relationship between humans and gods--fate determines the actions of my life.

# Behaviors

- **Observable patterns of action.**
  - ☐ Patterned--the group members predictably do the same things the same way.
  - ☐ Personal--an individual unpredictably does things differently.
- **Can indicate values and beliefs.**

# Norms

- **A range of permissible behaviors established and accepted by the group.**
  - ☐ Nearly everyone conforms--expect others to conform.
- **A tool used to create strategies for dealing with others.**
  - ☐ Gives everybody the same reason for a behavior.

# Symbols

- Represent something not present.
- Refer to something visible or invisible.
- Infer culture specific encoded information.

# Sanctions

- **Positive sanctions**

- ☐ material and status rewards by the group
- ☐ individual feels accepted, behavior patterns reinforced

- **Negative sanctions**

- ☐ range from informal avoidance to sentence of death
- ☐ individual feels alienated from others, subject to ridicule

# Taboos

- **Absolutely prohibited actions**
  - ☐ Invites the most extreme negative sanctions.
  - ☐ Endangers group cohesion and therefore not tolerated.
- **Examples**
  - ☐ Incest
  - ☐ Cannibalism
  - ☐ Blasphemy



# Stereotypes

- Generalizations about groups and individuals.
- Learned in childhood.
- Not based in reality.
- Distort one's view of others.

# Biases

- **Personal prejudices which impair judgment.**
  - ☐ Racial
  - ☐ Gender
  - ☐ Education
- **Result in unfair acts based on prejudice.**
- **May be positive or negative.**

# Culture Shock

- Confusion, uncertainty, anxiety that may affect people exposed to an alien culture or environment without adequate preparation.
- Everyone experiences culture shock in varying degrees.
- Is real and may have physical effects.
- Preparation can limit effects.

# Tactical Application of Cultural Knowledge (TACK)



Will this help us in our mission, or hurt us?

# Barriers to Cultural Understanding

- Force protection
- Stereotypes and biases
- Miscommunication
- Culture shock

# Rapport and Force Protection



**Building Rapport = Force Protection**

# Basic Cultural Factors to Consider

- **Elders:** they are important symbols in the area.
- **Females:** embody the honor of the family--males speak to the oldest male present to communicate with females.
- **Head of household:** use the male head of house to calm family members.
- **Religious objects:** treat with respect.
- **Dogs:** avoid their use as much as possible.

# Bottom Line

- ✓ Soldiers' safety is the #1 priority.
- ✓ SOP, ROE, Commander's Guidance.



- ✓ Cultural awareness.